DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 491 EA 016 056

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TITLE The Principalship and the Development of Instructional Expertise.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 49p.; Draft of paper prepared as part of an off campus course in Resource Management in Schools, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Administrator Role; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Human Resources; *Instructional Improvement; Literature Reviews; Outcomes of Education; *Principals; *School Supervision; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS Australia

ABSTRACT

Relevant theory and research are brought to bear on the questions of what administrators can do that makes a difference to student learning, of exactly what principals manage in their role as education leader, and of what knowledge they must have to increase learning in their schools. Conclusions are that principals can improve student achievement by concentrating on managing the "human resources" of their schools, that is, by exercising a personal commitment to instructional rather than administrative leadership, helping teachers to assess and improve their teaching. This role requires knowledge about what should be changed in teaching and methods of implementation, such as acting as a supportive leader, a process monitor, and a knowledgeable colleague to teachers, introducing them to theoretical insights. Several references are made to Australian theory and practice. (MJL)

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The Principalship and the Development of Instructional Expertise

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

1980

W. John Smyth

This is a draft copy of a paper prepared as part of an off campus course in Resource Management in Schools, at Deakin University, Victoria, Australia.

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The Principalship and the Development of Instructional Expertise

Overview

The purpose of this paper is to look at the task of developing the human resource potential within schools. When we consider that approximately 80% of the total expenditure within schools is consumed by salaries, developing and attending to the human teaching resources becomes an important task. Facilitating the growth and professional development of teachers should be a substantial agenda in all schools.

Discussion commences by briefly examining the issue of whether non-school factors outweight school factors in their contribution to student achievement. The point will be made that research findings on non-school factors have been seriously discredited on a number of grounds and that teachers 'do make a difference'. The reason early research on school effects has been so unproductive in demonstrating a relationship between what goes on inside schools and subsequent achievement has been because of their preoccupation with an input-output syndrome of research, to the comparative neglect of what goes on inside classrooms.

Further discussion will focus on methods by which school-based administrators can seek to mediate the often impenetrable barrier of the classroom door, without at the same time destroying teachers' sense of autonomy and professionalism. What happens inside the 'black box' of the classroom, is therefore considered as important.

The question of how much influence educational administrators at the individual school level can, and do, have on classrooms, is a topical one. Both observations and research suggest that principals who have assumed roles as 'educational' leaders within their schools have been able to do so because of a deep understanding of the complexities of classrooms and the teeming life within them, as well as possessing a profound sensitivity to the delicate task of working co-operatively with teachers in helping them become more effective. Coupled with this has been an acknowledgement by these principals of the need to work with 'alterable' classroom variables likely to culminate in changed levels of student learning.

This paper seeks to indirectly address three questions:

1 What can educational leaders in schools do that makes a difference to pupil learning?

2 In exercising this leadership function, what is it that it really being managed?

3 What knowledge is indispensable in enacting educational leadership that influences pupil learning?

Another look at School Effects

Research on school effects has tended to proceed on two levels, with little apparent connection between the two. Studies such as the Coleman Report (1966) have sought to establish connections between inputs of school resources and outputs of learning, generally measured in terms of school-wide achievement. These studies have become associated with endeavours by economists to isolate a school 'production function'. Other studies, with

a somewhat longer tradition, have focussed on classroom instruction with the intent of isolating teaching and classroom variables that relate to individual pupil learning, or teacher effectiveness. That these two branches of research, each aiming to arrive at a similar end point, have proceeded independently and without regard for the other, is disappointing. Given their different approaches, assumptions and methodologies, it may be that collectively these research efforts can explain what neither has been able to do on its own.

The depressing picture painted in early school effect studies of the Coleman variety, of schools having little impact on pupil achievement is not accurate. Quite apart from the debilitating impact of these studies on school practitioners, they have provided support for those who argue for reduced allocations of resources to education. Certainly those of us involved in the educational enterprise would be comforted by argument, if not evidence, to the contrary. It is encouraging to find that the dismal portrayals of Coleman and others have been quite seriously discredited on methodological grounds. There are serious doubts about the outcomes of those studies suggesting that out-of-school variables are all that count. One of the many re-analyses of data in the Coleman study concluded that the study "mired in the swamps of inappropriate methodologies as well as the mudholes of conceptual misdirection" (Wiley, 1976, p.264). What worried Wiley about the Coleman-type studies of school effects was the level at which discussion had tended to proceed; namely, "does schooling have any effect?" As Wiley and Harnischfeger (1974) note:

> Schooling does have effects and rather than asking if there are any effects of schooling, we should be asking how much of an effect schooling has. (p.7)

Asking the kind of question Harnischfeger and Wiley suggest requires a totally different emphasis to that of Coleman. As Brandt (1979) pointed out in reviewing a collection of papers on school and teacher effectiveness:

> We need to talk less about the relationship between school achievement and socio-economic variables educators can't do much about, and pay more attention to the factors we have some control over: what Bloom calls alterable variables. (p.3)

If we begin to think along these lines then we move in the direction suggested by Erickson (1979) of focussing our thoughts on within-school variables that show a likelihood of being related to student outcomes. His argument is that if we want answers to the way in which schools influence student outcomes, the most productive area lies in searching for determinants and consequences of various ways of organising the educational enterprise. Instead of focussing on organisation-wide variables, he suggests school administrators should concern themselves with closely examining ways in which instruction and learning are organised.

A disturbing feature of the formal study of educational organisations from an administrative perspective is the heavy reliance on bureaucratic theory borrowed from writers such as Taylor (1911), Weber (1947) and Argyris (1965). Maybe one of the reasons for the methodological malnutrition and rigor mortis evident in research and writing on educational administration is the implicit and unquestioned assumption that schools are essentially the same as coal mines in their organisational characteristics and design. The cracks are beginning to appear in the application of bureaucratic theory to schools (Hanson, 1976; Corwin, 1974; Lortie, 1969; Feitler, 1980; Weick, 1980; Popkewitz, 1979; Blumberg, 1980). While acknowledging the existence of a bureaucratic element within schools, theorists are beginning to describe schools by such terms as "loosely coupled systems", "organised anarchies",

as well as characterising them as being possessed by "administrative powerlessness", "garbage-can decision making" and "planning by muddling through". As a consequence the professional and collegial aspects of schools are drawing increasing attention from researchers and writers.

The major criticism of bureaucratic studies of schools is their failure to relate structural variables in any meaningful way to school outcomes. Their predominant concern has been with gross or macro variables measurable on an organisation-wide basis. Similarly, the school effects literature and the work on educational productivity have also been content to follow a similar broad route. The significance and importance of classrooms, teachers and pupils, have been lost in aggregations of school-wide data which conceal more than they disclose (Summers and Wolfe, 1977). The single most important criticism of the school effects studies and those that have pursued the illusive issue of school productivity (Cohn and Millman, 1975; Dreeben n.d.) has been their failure to look at classrooms and the richness of what transpires within them as the fundamental unit of analysis. Summers and Wolfe (1977) conclude:

> ... empirical investigations have failed to find potent school effects because the aggregative nature of the data used disguised the school's true impact. (p.640)

Encouraging indications are beginning to emerge from research that does start out by looking at classrooms as the "production centres" within schools (Barr, 1980a; 1980b; Bidwell and Kasarda, 1980; Barr and Dreeben, 1978; 1980; Monk, 1979).

Fietler (1980) made essentially the same point when he said "the primary functions of the school is to produce change in students and .... education 'production' takes place almost entirely in the classroom". (p.1)

The issue of how educational resources are actually translated into educational outcomes, has received scant attention. To pursue this issue further would involve an analysis of the way in which schools, and particularly classrooms, allocate, substitute and utilise the various resources available to them.

Clearly, if we wish to extend our understanding of the way in which resource allocations produce effects in schools we will need to look more carefully than we have in the past at the way in which these resources interact to produce outcomes in classrooms.

Is Educational Leadership the Answer?

As schools feel the full impact of declining student numbers it is important to understand the implications this holds for low staff mobility, shrinking promotional prospects, teacher morale and the consequent need for enhanced professional development and renewal of teachers already in schools. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979) expressed it thus:

> We are in a period of unprecedented interest in staff development programs for teachers. This interest is fueled by the stark realisation that a serious consequence of declining student enrolments and teacher surplus has been an increase in staff stability. Simply put, when teachers land a decent job, they are likely to stay. Combine this phenomenon with a relatively young teaching force, and (we) are faced with large numbers of teachers who are likely to stay employed in the same schools for the next 2 or 3 decades. (p.289)

The 'Decade of Reform' (1965-1975) demonstrated that even the best educational practices and materials amount to little in the hands of inadequately trained or unmotivated teachers (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978).

What is becoming increasingly evident is the fact that educational change and reform is primarily a function of human resource development (Sergiovanni and Carver, 1980). Given that schools as human service organisations (Hasenfeld and English, 1974) are involved in transactions associated with defining and altering behaviour, attributes or social status in order to maintain or enhance well being, it is imperative that adequate allowance be made for meaningful professional renewal of individual teachers (Smyth, 1980d).

An important and as yet unattended question in educational administration, was expressed well in the title of a paper by Deal and Celotti (1980): "How much influence do (and can) educational administrators have on classrooms?" The authors argue that the scope for formal influence by school administrators over what goes on in classrooms is likely to be very limited because of the loose linkages existing between the component parts of schools. Deal and Celotti suggest that any influence school administrators are likely to exert on classroom activities will be through their role as either "symbolic leaders" (enacting the myths, rituals and ceremonies which give schools their mission) or as "senior colleagues" of teachers.

Blumberg (1980) pursued this question in a study designed to find out the nature of the bondage between teachers and principals. He found teachers were "tied" to each other in a very different way, from the way in which teachers related to principals:

> ... Teachers appear to become closely linked with other teachers when there is a shared sense of values/commitment or a shared concern about teaching style.
>
> ... there seems to be a wider variety of behaviours in which principals can engage which may have the effect of creating closer ties with teachers ... [including] ... behaving in ways that enable teachers to capitalise on new teaching interests they might have, acknowledging and utilising (not merely praising) special skills a teacher might have, becoming collaboratively involved with a teacher ... being consistently supportive of teachers ... and sharing value congruence with teachers. (Blumberg, 1980, p.10)

Blumberg concludes that if we are looking for a tight bonding relationship between teachers and principals (similar to that existing between teachers) based on the principal's teaching and helping expertise, then we will probably find this only on rare occasions.

According to Erickson (1979) the reason we have been unable in the past to answer the kind of question raised by Deal and Celotti is because of our preoccupation in educational administration with the "Great Man interpretation of human events" (p.9). That is to say, educational accomplishments and the internal state of the educational enterprise have been explained in terms of inane capacities and charismatic qualities. Where the Great Man interpretation, and the views of leadership that derive from it, are seriously flawed are in their failure to explain the mediating variables and processes by which administrative action in schools eventually percolates through to proximal classroom-related variables such as teaching behaviour and pupil engagement on learning tasks. Put somewhat differently:

> Scholars in educational administration in the past have either been oblivious to the possibility of any relationship between the activities of the principal and pupil learning, or completely daunted by the multiplicity of intervening variables constituting causal networks. (Smyth, 1980a, p.3)

The related question of how school administrators can influence instruction in classrooms, without simultaneously appearing to subvert the autonomy and professionalism of teachers, is just as urgently in need of attention.

Superficially it would seem that principals can choose either to intervene in classrooms (in which case they run the risk of transgressing the professionalism of their teachers), or they can remain out of classrooms (and allow teachers freedom to develop as professionals). This "either or" view of teacher supervision is a typical example of what Hills (1975) believes is a common failing among principals - an inability to take apart complex issues and problems, and reconstruct situations so as to make conceptual sense of the world they inhabit. Complex problems require more than simple answers. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979) have tried to unravel this particularly complexity:

> The dominant ideologies in [principal] supervision [of teachers] are those associated with human relations and scientific management. The effect of human relations have been to adopt laissez faire approaches [towards teachers] which severely downgrade classroom supervision. Presumably, it is considered that teachers are professionals, and if treated nicely, but otherwise left alone, they will respond properly. The classroom is the castle of the teacher as a professional, and classroom supervision is viewed as threatening to, or usurping of, teacher authority. (p.284).

The authors argue that this is really a rationalisation for principals who may possess some administrative and interpersonal abilities but who "are otherwise weak or uncomfortable in dealing with the educational side of the enterprise ". (p.284).

Sergiovanni (1979) sought to bring further focus to this problem through the cynical title of a paper: "Is leadership the next great training robbery?" He argues for a shift in emphasis from *leadership training*, which presupposes we know the answers, to *leadership exploration*, which might enable us to start grappling with andunravelling the complexities of leadership effectiveness and its likely relationship to school outcomes.

Declining pupil numbers, staff stability and falling allocations of financial resources to education in real terms, are all occurring in an economic and political climate of heightened public awareness and debate over the quality of educational output. It is inevitable that increasing pressure will be brought to bear on schools to "deliver the goods". Under these conditions it is not unreasonable that we ask questions about the role we expect educational leaders in schools to play in these changed circumstances, particularly with respect to the improvement of human teaching resources.

Past academic discussions of leadership theories and styles, seems to have moved us nowhere. The question we need to keep continually asking ourselves is: "What leadership activities produce results with teachers which flow on to desired pupil outcomes?" This is a difficult question because of the number of intervening and confounding variables.

Is the Principal the Culprit?

It is disturbing, although not surprising to find little research on the impact of differential administrative practices on the learning of

pupils. The limited amount of research that *does* exist is encouraging to those who believe that the principal *should* be an educational leader within his/her school.

Reflecting on the state of knowledge 20 years ago, Bennis (1959) concluded:

> Of all the hazy and confounding areas in social psychology, leadership theory undoubtedly contends for top nomination and ironically, probably more has been written and less is known about leadership than any other topic in the behavioural sciences. (p.259)

Despite additions to the already mountainous literature, Kiesling (1971) was moved to comment in 1971 that educators were still "abysmally ignorant of the traits of a good school manager." (p.38)

More recently a number of studies have addressed the persistent and perplexing question of educational leadership in the context of measured school outcomes. Wellisch, MacQueen, Carriere and Duck (1978) asked: "What characterizes management and organization in schools that are successful in raising student achievement?" After allowing for student background characteristics this study found successful schools (ones which succeeded in raising student achievement beyond expected levels), had administrators who (a) were more concerned with instruction ; (b) communicated their views about instruction; (c) took responsibility for decisions relating to instruction ; (d) co-ordinated instructional programs; and (e) emphasised academic standards. What this study also underscored was the means by which administrators in successful schools communicated their views on instruction to teachers. A prevalent method was regular review and discussion with teachers about their classroom performance. Emphasis on academic standards in those schools appeared to occur through administrators paying more

attention than their counterparts in less successful schools to the process of reviewing teaching performance, opposing the postponement of teaching basic skills, and by requiring students to repeat grades when their performance was unsatisfactory.

The emphasis in this research was clearly on the provision of task-related direction and guidance to teachers by administrators, while at the same time allowing for adequate and meaningful input from teachers. The more diffuse role of educational administrators in successful schools was also reflected in the fact that their success was not attributable to their promotion of any specific instructional techniques. Speaking of the similarities between the practices of administrators in successful schools, Wellisch *et al.* (1979) comment:

> Instead, they may be similar in that their instructional programs are co-ordinated and internally consistent across grades and in classes, or in that each teacher is supported in using well whatever instructional techniques that teacher understands best. In other words, the relevance of active administrative involvement to school success may be that it represents a general intervention strategy, facilitating a co-ordinated school-wide program in which the capabilities of the staff are supported and strengthened, (p.220)

A number of other U.S. studies (Michigan State Department of Education, 1976; Ellis, 1975; California Department of Education, 1977; Philadelphia Reserve Bank,), have reached essentially the same conclusion - that school administrator involvement and demonstrated capabilities in instructional leadership are major hallmarks distinguishing successful schools from less successful ones.

Klitgaard and Hall (1973), for example, surmised that the fault with earlier research on school effects was that it looked in the wrong places for evidence of effectiveness. Instead of looking for the impact of school policies on measurable student academic performance, Klitgaard and Hall analysed data from "outlier" or "exemplary" schools (i.e. schools that were unusual). The outcome of this research was that no single factor stood out as accounting for the exceptional nature of good schools. Rather, there appeared to be a mass of critical positive factors, which when put together, made the difference (Austin, 1980). Prominent in this critical mass, was substantial administrator involvement in classroom situations and the associated teaching functions of the school (Austin, 1979).

Support for the critical mass viewpoint is also contained in a secondary source study by Clark, Lotto and McCarthy, 1980, of elementary urban schools, where outlier or "maverick" schools were isolated with higher than expected levels of achievement. One of the consistent conclusions from this study was that leaders in successful schools "did more!" Leaders in successful schools were portrayed as effecting change through their influence on teachers, particularly through their exhortations to them to concentrate on "teaching". Clark *et al.* concluded that a number of interdependent variables were necessary, and that foremost amongst these was a visible interest and meaningful involvement in mainstream academic activities of the school.

What is emerging fairly clearly from these studies is that administrator involvement may be a "necessary" but not a "sufficient" factor in the amalgam of ingredients in "successful" schools.

Concerned about what they heard school principals saying about the erosion of the basis of power upon which they were expected to exert educational leadership, Guditus and Zirkel (1979) pursued this issue. Where research in the 1960's had shown principals deriving their power from legitimate sources (that bestowed by legislative enactment) and expert bases (possession and demonstration of special skills and knowledge), Guditus and Zirkel found teachers *still* did what principals requested because of legitimate power, but teacher satisfaction with the way the principal performed was linked to the special skills and knowledge the principal could bring to bear in assisting teachers achieve their goals. Guditus and Zirkel (1979) noted that principals in larger schools seemed less inclined (whether because of lack of time or lack of inclination), to engage in direct program and staff development within their schools. These researchers argued that "to the extent possible this gap would seem to be worth closing". (p.16).

The research, therefore, seems to support what has been argued in the advocacy literature (Bridges, 1967; Fallon, 1979; Frasher and Frasher, 1979; Grassie, 1978, 1979a; Purkerson, 1977; Robinson, 1977; Smyth, 1980a; Weldy, 1979; Zechman, 1977) - that the principal, as the appointed leader within the school, should exercise a heavy personal commitment to the instructional, as distinct from the administrative, mandate of the school. What is equally clear is that the literature on social psychology (Katz and Kahn, 1966) and administrative behaviour (Porter, Lawler and Hackman, 1975) is limited in its usefulness in schools because of its failure to attend to the context, texture and problems of schools. As Grassie (1979a) has noted:

> Leadership cannot be displayed in a vacuum, it needs a context, and our characteristic context is the classroom. Morale boosting, team building, personal and professional development, innovating, cannot be divorced from the problems generated within that context and must go on *pari passu* with the solving of these problems. (p.6)

Quite apart from what the research suggests there is an important body of literature that discusses the role of the principal. Goodlad (1978) and Grassie (1979a) have been prominent in arguing that the most pressing and urgent problems confronting principals have to do with perplexing issues relating to the process of schooling itself, rather than with the process of administering schools. Salient concerns confronting principals include:

- how do students learn most effectively given the constraints within schools?
- in what ways do peer and social relationships influence student learning?
- what kind of knowledge is worth learning so as to accommodate the need to educate the whole child while also ensuring employability?
- how can teachers acknowledge pupil diversity and manage the class as a whole?
- how can the principal relate to teachers on a one-to-one basis?
- how can the principal work collaboratively with teachers without interfering with teacher professionalism?
- which variables can teachers effectively manipulate?
- how can the principal obtain usable knowledge about effective teaching?

In the Australian setting there is evidence to suggest that "the principal's power [is] under attack" (Hewitt, 1976). Speaking as president of the Victorian High School Principals' Association, Hewitt (1976) indicated:

> Within the school system today the principal is often seen as the one with least expertise in comparison with other staff members, such as subject co-ordinators, because there have been considerable developments in curriculum over recent years. The principal of tomorrow must be seen as having high expertise, and able to help teachers. The day has passed when the principal can depend on legitimate authority. The only alternative is to improve his expertise and be an educational leader. He must improve his knowledge and skill in the areas of instruction , curriculum, decision-making, communication and leadership. (p.43)

This view would seem to be endorsed by teachers in Australia. Simpson's (1976) study investigated principals' behaviour giving rise to feelings of "concern: and "pleasure" in teachers. He found teacher concern to be related to the role of the principal as an "administrator", and pleasure to be related to the role of the principal as "leader", where leadership was defined as:

> the behaviour of a principal who was well informed on educational matters, utilized teachers' talents, supported them in matters of discipline, bestowed praise for good work ... and treated teachers' ideas as worthwhile. (p.166)

What this appears to point to is a different role for the school principal, from that traditionally envisaged. Hills (1977) characterised the principal of the 1960's, thus:

> ... the head, aged sixty-one, balding, with a craggy jaw, is not unusual amongst principals of state secondary schools. Headships are awarded mainly on the basis of years of service. A teacher must prove himself competent in the classroom ... but beyond that his promotions may increasingly rest on his years of service. A man or

> woman becomes a senior teacher, then a deputy, then finally a principal, if he or she sticks at it long enough, and is prepared to apply widely enough for promotion to schools in almost any part of the state ... You are talking to a pretty old dog when you talk to most headmasters. (p.59)

Fitzgerald (1979) believes that there must be "some harsh judgements made of the proportion of former teachers who hibernate in the guise of educational administrators". (p.13)

With the persistent clamour for accountability for what transpires as learning within our schools, it will become increasingly difficult for principals to avoid their responsibility for direct and substantial involvement in the educational side of the school. Speaking of Australian principals, Fitzgerald (1979) maintains that "the claim of being too busy has been a lame defence for an inability to exercise instructional leadership" (p.12). Fallon (1979) responds to principals who argue "I don't have time to be an instructional leader", by saying:

> The rationalization may be actuality for some situations; however, there is always a lingering hunch that principals find a modicum of security in concentrating on 'countables' and tangibles and go out of their way to look for these kind of things to avoid the toughest job in the world - assessing teaching/learning situations and suggesting ways of improving them (p.68).

Perhaps the answer for principals lies, as Sergiovanni (1980) suggests, in principals carefully examining how they use their time, and planning so that they allocate their time according to what they claim as being most valuable and important within their schools. To espouse something as being worthwhile, is insufficient on its own. Teachers, pupils and the community will infer *what* the principal considers to be important by the *way* he/she spends the day.

> If most of his or her time is spent on busy office work and on administrative maintenance activities, observers will learn that 'running a smooth ship' is the goal of real value to the principal, and will likely behave accordingly (Sergiovanni, 1980, p.2).

Looking at the changing economic, political and social scene in Australia, O'Brien (1979) believes it is inevitable that a major shift in the principal's role is necessary.

> The principal, and his deputy will fade from the scene as conditions change, hopefully with grace, but with historic inevitability ... Just as specialized teaching roles will (and are) emerging, so the role of school manager will develop; he will be a professional manager rather than an ex-teacher. The traditional role for the recruitment of principals from the ranks of good teachers will cease. It will be recognized that the place of good teachers is where they can be of most help ... teaching their students and helping them to learn (p.8).

According to Williams (1979), too many principals have abdicated instructional leadership as a matter of choice.

Given the apparent and increasing confusion surrounding the principalship (Grassie, 1978; 1979a; 1979b; Edmonds, 1974; Smyth, 1980a) it is time we clarified the issue for the benefit of all concerned. Is he to be a manager or is he to be an educational leader?

Grassie (1979a) made a substantial move in this direction when he highlighted the misconstrued and misunderstood nature of the principalship. He suggested that the counterpart of the school principal, in industry or commerce, is not the high level executive removed from the "firing line", but the front-line supervisor who is in close and continual contact with the mainstream activities for which the organisation exists. If this

realigned analogy of the principal is true, then as a front-line supervisor the principal must be proficient and knowledgeable in the process he/she is purporting to supervise. This is not to suggest that the principal become a "supervisor" in the sense of a rigid, authoritarian quality control person - far from it! Neither should the principal aspire to the status of full-time educational consultant, expert in all manner of curriculum content. Rather, what is required is something a lot more subtle and pervasive. The principal should be required to possess a working knowledge of sound pedagogical practice along with an understanding and capacity to assist teachers in improving their classroom performance and the learning of their pupils. Assisting teachers to see themselves and their teaching in a clearer light and to improve as a consequence, is probably one of the most difficult yet useful tasks confronting the school principal today. Debate over whether the school principal is/can be/should be, an instructional (educational?) leader, is not a new one. It is a question that has long generated heat in the U.K. (Hughes, 1976), the U.S.A. (Bridges, 1967; Krajewski, 1978; Mullican and Ainsworth, 1979), as well as Australia. Various aspects of this topic are dealt with by Fallon (1979) and Weldy (1979) in the U.S.A.; Hughes (1976) in the U.K.; and Grassie (1978; 1979) in Australia.

To seriously undertake the task of helping teachers to bring about changes will require that principals, as educational leaders, possess two kinds of knowledge:

(a) Knowledge about what is worth changing in teaching, and what *can* be changed;

(b) Knowledge about *how to* implement changes in teaching.

The section that follows focuses on each of these.

Where to From Here?

An important precursor to the developments just mentioned is that of breaking down the barriers that currently exist in the minds of scholars, researchers and school practitioners between matters "administrative" (that occur outside of classrooms) and matters "instructional" (that occur within classrooms). As Erickson (1977) and Hills (1975) have both noted, students of educational administration stand to benefit by devoting more of their time to the study of learning theory and less to the pursuit of organisational theory. Hills (1975) is convinced that:

> ... the [principal] who knows only administration, who knows nothing about issues of education and learning, can be little more than a spectator in his own school ... (p.12)

There may be an important implicit message in the title of Goodlad and Klein's (1970) book *Behind the Classroom Door*. Notwithstanding the importance of the message, the culture of the school and the restraining and isolating effect of teacher-teacher and teacher-principal behaviour do represent a substantial barrier. The dilemma confronting the principal with respect to his intervention into classrooms is expressed by Sarason (1971):

> There is little [the principal] feels he can do about what goes on in the classroom, particularly if the teacher has tenure or has been a teacher for a number of years. As a result, the principal tolerates situations that by his values or standards are 'wrong'. Because his toleration is frequently accompanied by feelings of guilt and inadequacy it frequently has an additional consequence : the tendency to deny that these situations exist in the school. (p.120)

Despite Sarason's pessimism, one finding that has emerged with remarkable consistency from recent large-scale innovation projects in schools in the U.S., such as the Rand Study (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978) and I/D/E/A (Goodlad, 1975), is that the role of the principal is crucial in the process. Statements are made freely that schools which had the "active support" of their principals performed much better in terms of implementation and pupil performance. What these reports are desperately short on is precisely *how* principals should go about the task of being "active", in a way that counts, and without totally subverting the teacher's autonomy in the classroom.

As a first stage in extricating themselves from this situation, principals might heed the advice of Matthews and Brown (1976) that as educational leaders they *can* influence the improvement of learning. This requires thinking and acting in a manner consistent with the view that they *can* have an impact on pupil outcomes. The second stage, according to Williams (1979), involves 3 aspects:

1 The principal as a supportive leader.

2 The principal as a process monitor.

3 The principal as a knowledgeable colleague.

Williams arrived at these suggestions through his own direct involvement in disseminating the findings of a large U.S. research project (Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study, BTES) which had as its object : isolating the skills and qualities necessary for elementary teachers to impart learning effectively in the classroom. While the implications of the findings relating to "academic learning time", "classroom environment", "pupil success rate", "teacher diagnostic skills" and "effective learning time", were clear enough for teachers, Williams asked the question: Of what value

are these findings to school principals, and what might they do in respect of their implementation? These are questions we shall return to shortly.

Principal as a Supportive Leader

The innovation and educational change literature is replete with exhortations to principals to act supportively towards teachers in order to ensure the achievement of desired outcomes in both the short and long term. Claims on the need to engender a facilitative, warm and accepting climate within the school so that teachers may grow and develop professionally, almost assume the status of motherhood statements. The Rand Study (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978), for example, concluded that: "The principal's unique contribution ... lies not in 'how to do it' advice ... but in giving moral support to the staff and in creating an organisational climate that gives ... legitimacy" (p.31).

Exhortations of this kind may be all very well, but on their own they could easily be misinterpreted as evidence of a lack of real interest and authenticity on the part of the leader. This is not to deny, of course, that where teachers try to do things without the support of the principal that the going will be tough! At the same time, something more than a smooth human relations approach would seem to be required.

A recent personal communication from a principal of an Australian school exemplified the glibness and superficiality of the nurturant stance mentioned above. He was most indignant and offended by my suggestion that

principals become "actively" involved in the professional development of their teachers. His main contribution to the development of *his* teaching staff was that of "sympathy and encouragement". What thinking of this ilk demonstrates is a severe case of tunnel vision of the kind alluded to earlier by Sergiovanni and Starratt. While the autonomy and professionalism of teachers in classrooms certainly should be acknowledged and respected, it is not sufficient to argue that they will somehow develop and bloom professionally by being "left alone". This is a fallacy! If large numbers of principals seriously ascribe to this "Little Bo-Peep" philosophy of "... leave them alone and they will come home wagging their tails behind them" (especially after one-shot in-service days), then a gross disservice is being perpetrated on the teachers and pupils in our schools!

Principal as a Process Monitor

This aspect of the principal's role rests largely on his/her knowledge and understanding of the school as a social system. This involves a knowledge of what kind of changes are likely to "work" in a school, and a capacity to keep them under informal surveillance. A recent research project designed to isolate "schools that work" (exemplary schools where achievement levels were higher than predicted) found that:

> teachers are sure the principal knows what's going on in each classroom, although the knowledge may be picked up quickly and informally; [these] principals are seen as people who can tell a lot about a classroom while saying 'Good Morning'. (Salganick, 1980, p.29)

Monitoring educational processes in schools also involves a lot more than this. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979) argue that superior teaching and more humane learning do not come about by legislation or decree - it is engendered through the efforts of competent professionals within schools. Part of the process of ensuring continued professional competence within schools lies in creating mechanisms by which teachers may acquire informative feedback on their own classroom teaching. While it is important that school principals keep an eye on their schools in a global sense, they must also work closely with individual teachers, acknowledging where they are at in their development as teachers and helping them to enhance their teaching. Prima facie this involves treating teachers as mature and competent professionals, until evidence is accumulated to suggest otherwise (Hills, 1975). Arends, Hersh and Turner (1978) suggest this may involve asking some searching and fundamental questions, like:

- who is the person?
- what does the person want?
- what does the person believe?
- what does the person know?
- what does the person know how to do?
- what is the person doing? (p.200)

What is required is "supervision", not of an authoritarian quality-control kind, but of a constructive participatory type that helps teachers move from a state of "super-vision" to one of self-regulation, i.e., "self-vision" (Warner, Houston and Cooper, 1977). The concept and practice of "clinical supervision" as espoused by Cogan (1973), Anderson, Krajewski and Goldhammer (1980) and Smyth (1980b) measures up well. It is based on the notion of mutual participation by both parties - supervisor (principal) and

teacher. The emphasis is upon in-the-classroom, face-to-face, data-based, instructional supervision. In the words of Warner *et al*, (1977):

> Clinical supervision is a cyclical process involving: a preobservation conference in which the teacher shares instructional goals with a supervisor as they jointly clarify goals and objectives and determine how to assess the extent to which goals may be achieved; collection of data by the supervisor through actual classroom observation; analysis of data and preparation of conferencing strategies by the supervisor; sharing of data with the teacher in a post-observation conference; and joint planning for future goals for professional growth. (p.16)

Without being unnecessarily scientific the process is organised to foster growth as a result of a data base, rather than relying on the chancey business of global and impressionistic value judgements. What this approach also does is blur the boundaries between "formative" (helping), and "summative" (judgemental) evaluation of teachers. When teacher evaluation is incorporated as part of clinical supervision and conducted by the principal, the potential exists for changing the environment associated with evaluation from one of "suspicion, fear and mistrust" to a "problem-solving atmosphere". (Sullivan, 1980, p.31)

It is easy to argue that the extent of the principal's involvement in activities of this kind is likely to be contingent upon school size. In other words, the larger the school, the less time available to the principal to spend in providing assistance to teachers through instructional supervision. Rational though the argument may sound, it largely misses the point. While it may appear logical for the principal to delegate this function to subordinates so he/she is available to "administer" the school and ensure its smooth running, what this argument overlooks is that the way superiors

are perceived to allocate their time speaks to the values they ascribe to things important in the enterprise. Principals who are genuine about improving instructional performance, and hence learning, in their schools, demonstrate their commitment through involvement.

Professional development of the genre described, assumes the form and features of "human resource development", in contrast to the "human relations" approach (Miles, 1974). Where the latter aims to make people feel an important and useful part of the total organisational effort, the former rests on the belief that individual teachers comprise reservoirs of untapped resources to be worked with in a collaborative and mutual problem-solving way on issues of interest and worth to teachers.

Principal as Knowledgeable Colleague

> Unlike those who aspire to lead in certain other groups, the instructional leader does not have to be able to jump higher, run faster, compute more quickly, [swear] more loudly, balance a cup of tea more delicately, or otherwise continually exhibit qualities deemed superior to those with whom he or she works. (Mullican and Ainsworth, 1979, p.33)

To accept Mullican and Ainsworth's vision of the instructional leader at face value, is to accept that he/she is indistinguishable from the mass of teachers. Yet, simple observation of educational leaders in action, particularly principals, tells us that they *are* different! If we believe that the collegial route as embodied in clinical supervision and similar schemes, is the most productive one worth pursuing, it is important to

acknowledge that those interpersonal differences that do exist in knowledge and expertise derive from specialisation of task rather than superior/ subordinate relationships. Variations between people should be looked upon as unequal distributions of different kinds of knowledge being brought to bear on a common problem or shared situation. As Cogan (1973) has stated:

> The relationship between teacher and clinical supervisor is maintained in force as long as they can work together productively as colleagues. It deteriorates significantly or ceases to exist when either assumes an ascendant role or is accorded an ascendant role by the other. This delicate balance in working togehter as equals does not imply that teacher and supervisor have similar and equal professional competences. On the contrary, they commonly have dissimilar and unequal competences. This heterogeneity is nurtured in their association and constitutes one of its principal strengths. In clinical supervision the interaction of similar competences at equal levels is generally less productive than the interaction of unequal levels of competence and dissimilar competences. Such productive heterogeneity may be observed when the clinical supervisor, highly competent in observation, the analysis of teaching and the processes connected with the cycle of supervision, works with a teacher who is more competent in knowledge of the curriculum, his students, their learning characteristics and transient and persistent problems, and the school subsocieties to which they belong. (p.68)

The question, therefore, becomes : what kind of knowledge is important to principals in their role as instructional leaders? We have already spoken about one aspect - knowledge about how to work and communicate with teachers in problem-solving situations to improve teaching and learning. The second consists of two related parts : (a) knowledge about pedagogy and findings from research on teaching; and (b) knowledge about what is usable and how to incorporate it into classroom practice.

We know very little at the moment about the way in which practising teachers and principals value research-based knowledge. We do know that there is a low level of usage of research findings in schools. We also know that teachers and principals are neither habitual nor avid readers of research as reported in scholarly journals (Finger, 1977; 1978; 1979; Stenhouse, 1978; Hogben, 1980; Fillos, Bailey and Foster, 1980).

Stenhouse (1978) has described an interesting hypothetical scenario in which he places himself in the situation of a teacher wishing to utilise research to improve his teaching. The scenario commences with the rather unlikely occurrence of the teacher locating an unpublished research report which he intends using to improve his teaching of a unit on race relations. After noting methodological quirks such as pre-tests, post-tests, non-randomness of sampling, means, standard deviations, significance levels, etc., the teacher arrives at the point where he decides upon some hypotheses to be trialled in his classroom.

While certainly a logical and a laudable approach, the situation described by Stenhouse is unfortunately far removed from reality; Stenhouse would openly admit this. As Hogben (1980) notes, teachers don't "turn to the education research literature for help" (p.62) - colleagues are a far more likely avenue of pursuit, if indeed teachers bother to seek assistance at all.

To assume that teachers *want to change* and become *better* teachers by looking at their own practise in the light of research findings, is in itself a big and possibly unwarranted assumption. One could imagine a situation, for example, where substantial numbers of teachers, if left alone, would be quite satisfied with their own teaching even though evidence and performance

indicated the contrary to be the case. Under these circumstances it becomes the function of the principal to convince these teachers, on grounds of professional accountability or whatever, that it is desirable to be introspective about one's teaching, keeping in mind a number of alternative options that might be selectively trialled in the classroom.

Why teachers don't operate in the manner described by Stenhouse is due to 3 major reasons. Firstly, the research is often not accessible, being reported in scholarly journals and unpublished technical reports. Secondly, it is often not written in the interpretative manner necessary for implementation in classrooms; and thirdly, the evidence is sometimes conflicting and what applies in one situation with one grade, certain students, in specific subject matter, may not readily generalise to other areas.

Principals, therefore, in addition to publicly displaying a concern about matters instructional through their involvement, can provide an important service to teachers by *synthesising* and organising some of the more consistent research findings, and *sensitising* teachers to some practical possibilities that exist for experimentation in their classrooms. This might take the form, for example, of "skimming" periodicals and directing the attention of individual teachers to specific findings during clinical supervision encounters; or, writing a review of major recent research findings in a staff newsletter; or, setting aside times for staff discussion of research articles. (Finger, 1978)

Exactly what classroom practitioners stand to gain from research on teaching is a question that Fenstermacher (1979) addresses. According to

Firstly, we can use them to frame "rules" to bridge the research/practise gap - that is to say, we can treat the findings as conclusive statements to be directly implemented in classrooms. Apart from the practical problem of actually converting scientific research into rules, Fenstermacher is worried about the detrimental effect rule imposition has on teachers' perceptions of their own status and competence. Secondly, "bridging with evidence", involves using research findings to call into question teachers' beliefs and extant classroom practise. The advantage of this approach is that it does not automatically require a modification of beliefs upon presentation of findings - rather it requires that teachers engage in the process of "weighing" the evidence. Thirdly, "bridging with schemata" involves providing a language with which to describe classroom situations and thus grasp their meaning and significance.

Which of these bridging techniques principals choose to use with their teachers depends largely on the end point they want to arrive at. Treating research findings as "rules", while acceptable, will move people in a very different direction than if they treat them as "evidence" or "schemata".

Other writers have also taken up the issue of the utility of research findings. The prevailing view is that how you use them depends very much on how definitive you view the status of the findings. Good and Power (1976) expressed it neatly when they said:

> We suspect that the generalizations deriving from classroom research and theory have a different role from those of the natural sciences. They function not as predictors of future events but as guidelines for understanding particular situations and contexts. Thus, at least generalizations about teaching derived from research act as guides to assessing the likely consequences of alternative strategies in complex educational situations. Such generalizations must necessarily be indeterminate since they cannot

> predict precisely what will happen in a particular case. But this does not decrease their value for the teacher : he is not interested in establishing general laws. Theories can be of value in specifying dimensions which are relevant to an understanding of classroom phenomena, can extend the range of hypotheses (alternative strategies) considered, and sensitize the teacher to the possible consequences of his actions. Indeed, ultimately, the validity and usefulness of theory may rest in the hands of teachers ... - whether it sensitizes them to the classroom context, helps them make more informed decisions, and to monitor their own behaviour. (p.47)

In a related vein, Good (1979) has indicated that it is probably not possible to "tell teachers how to teach", but rather it may only be possible to provide them with concepts from research that enable them to reconsider their teaching behaviour and improve as a consequence. By way of example, the term "teacher effectiveness" is generally not taken today to have a strictly causal meaning. Rather, it is more loosely taken to mean "pupil outcomes that are influenced by or traceable to certain teacher activities (Smyth, 1979, p.19).

Speaking about a group of classroom variables labelled as Academic Learning Time, and which have been shown to have a strong relationship with pupil achievement outcomes in classrooms (Fisher, Filby, Marliave, Cahen, Dishaw, Moore and Berliner, 1978; Smyth, 1980c; 1981), Berliner (1980) described these as a group of "orienting variables" - a group of salient and manipulable concepts teachers might be mindful of in reflecting on the impact of their teaching on pupils. Glaser and Strauss (1967) would describe these research findings as "working hypotheses", while Cronbach (1975) would view them as an exemplar of "short-run empiricism" - soundings to be taken as one proceeds into unfamiliar waters! According to Cronbach, findings of this kind should be treated as being "response sensitive". As teachers monitor the effect of changing their own behaviour, they make changes in

the light of experience.

One final aspect to keep in mind with research findings is the importance of "alterable variables". As Bloom (1980) has indicated:

> While [some] studies do demonstrate significant effects of the home on school achievement, they are not very helpful to the schools or parents, because characteristics are not alterable. There is little the school or parents can do to alter their level of education, occupation, income or ethnic characteristics. While such studies may be of some slight value for predicting level of learning for groups of children, they offer no specific clues as to what the schools or parents can do to improve their children's learning. (p.385)

On the other hand, in searching for controllable variables we need to be careful of searching for simple answers to complex problems. Research on teaching has shown fairly conclusively that there is no single variable, or group of variables, which on their own "hold up" under all circumstances. What the research is beginning to show is that groups of interacting variables when carefully "orchestrated" (McDonald, 1976) by the teacher - at the right grade level, with the right pupils, in the right subject matter - can produce significantly enhanced learning by pupils.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

It was fashionable in the 1960's and 1970's to review large numbers of studies of research on teaching and to arrive at pessimistic conclusions (Heath and Neilson, 1974). Speaking about this era, Doyle (1978) noted: "Reviewers ... concluded, with remarkable regularity, that few consistent relationships between teacher variables and effectiveness criteria [were] established" (p.164). Heath and Neilson (1974), reviewing the evidence, claimed: "the research literature on the relation between teacher behaviour and student achievement does not offer an empirical basis for the prescription

of teacher training objectives" (p.481). Shavelson and Russo (1977) claimed that research has not "identified features of human teaching which lead directly - or even indirectly - to valued student outcomes" (p.171).

At the basis of these damning summations of the research were a number of methodological research arguments. There are now grounds for suspecting that the condemnation of findings from early studies of teacher effectiveness was hasty and may have been less than totally justified (Gage, 1978a; 1978b; Glass, 1976).

Fortunately, we seem to have emerged from the "nothing makes a difference" syndrome, with a number of recent studies producing consistent findings across studies. The findings cited below are not meant to be exhaustive of research generally in classrooms, or in any way prescriptive. What they do indicate is that there is an accumulating body of empirically derived knowledge that provides us with indicators of teaching behaviours shown to be associated with higher levels of pupil achievement, at least among elementary school pupils in reading and mathematics.

Some of the tenable conclusions emerging from correlational and experimental studies in the U.S., have been linked together under the rubric of "direct instruction" (Rosenshine, 1976; Berliner and Rosenshine, 1977). In synthesis form, this approach to teaching suggests that:

(a) teachers place a clear focus on academic goals;

(b) teachers make an effort to promote extensive content coverage and high levels of student involvement in classroom tasks;

(c) teachers select instructional goals and materials, and actively monitor student progress, towards these goals;

(d) teachers structure learning activities, and feedback is immediate and academically oriented;

(e) teachers create an environment that is task oriented but relaxed (Rosenshine, 1979).

In a similar vein Good and Grouws (1979) concluded that "effective" teachers in elementary school mathematics,

(a) taught the class basically as a whole (a few students might be assigned individual work), but essentially the teacher had one instructional group;

(b) presented information more actively and clearly;

(c) were task-focussed (most of the period was spent on mathematics, not socialization);

(d) were basically non-evaluative and created a relatively relaxed learning environment (comparatively little praise or criticism);

(e) expressed higher achievement expectations (more homework, faster pace, more alert environment); and

(f) had fewer behavioural problems. (p.40)

Research in both mathematics (Evertson, Anderson, Anderson and Brophy, 1980) and language arts (Stallings, 1978) at the secondary school level, have produced essentially the same findings.

Conclusion

The discussion has moved full circle. From our beginnings on school and teacher effects, discussion looked at leadership issues and the possible role of the principal in instructional matters and how principals might interpret and make use of some of the research findings.

Clearly teachers *can* and *do* have an impact on pupil learning. What remains questionable is the magnitude of this effect; likewise, the influence of differential administrative practices within schools. Notwithstanding these factors, encouraging evidence is beginning to point to principals

(at least in the elementary school) who provide exemplary leadership to other senior staff by involving themselves in classroom-related matters with teachers, as having more "successful" schools. An allocation of at least a portion of their time on working supportively and collaboratively with teachers, enables principals to provide meaningful feedback to teachers on their classroom performance. This is one of the most valuable contributions principals can make in the professional development of their staff.

To avoid the situation of this guided self-analysis becoming a "closed loop" (Sergiovanni, 1976), principals might usefully sensitise teachers to alternative possibilities from research on teaching that might be trialled experimentally and monitored.

A predictable reaction of sceptical classroom practitioners to recent findings from research on teaching may well be: "So what's new? Teachers have known these things for years!" In another context, I have responded thus:

> Novel or not, the findings discussed here *do* contain substance. If nothing else, they provide confirmation to 'good' teachers that tried and tested practises grounded in teachers' own theories of classroom practise, do in fact stand up credibly under close empirical scrutiny. Confirmation of common-sense notions, however, does not necessarily imply widespread or common acceptance. While research and the visions of some practitioners may both point [in the same direction] ..., let us not delude ourselves into believing that all classroom practitioners possess the necessary skills required for implementation. Many of the requisites *can* be acquired, but only as a consequence of careful observation and extensive practice. (Smyth, 1981)

Those of us inclined to be hesitant about the implementation of findings such as these, may gain comfort from the fact that the three-tiered system of British education established in the 1940's with its relegation of pupils to

pigeon holes at the age of 11 years, was based on the much more suspect findings on I.Q. by the celebrated British psychologist, Cyril Byrt!

Precisely how principals and teachers choose to utilise the above or any other research findings, depends on the level of professional development of individual teachers, what is considered acceptable, feasible and workable given the constraints, and the way in which the participants feel most comfortable in bridging the theory-research-practice gap.

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